



CALIFORNIA HIGH-SPEED RAIL AUTHORITY

MEMORANDUM

To: Chairperson and Authority Members Date: June 1, 2009

From: Mehdi Morshed, Executive Director

Subject: Agenda Item 7 – 2009 High Speed Train Legislation

Discussion

At the May 7, 2009 monthly Board meeting, staff presented an action item summarizing new high-speed train legislation introduced in the 2009-10 Legislative Session. A total of ten (10) new bills were identified as affecting or having the potential to affect in different ways the high-speed train project or related intercity passenger rail operations. The report anticipated that the Authority could be asked for its views, if any, on the various measures as the new bills were scheduled for legislative policy and fiscal hearings and started to move through the legislative process. The legislative report highlighted the provisions of the various bills and recommended to the Board formal positions on several bills and that the Board monitor the status and progress of the other bills. After a brief discussion, the Board approved the recommended positions and action on the bills and asked that staff keep board members informed of important developments in the language or status of the bills. In the month since the May board meeting, the legislative policy and fiscal deadlines for bills in the house of origin have passed, and action on the “Suspense” files of the two appropriations committees has been concluded. Consequently, the action on 2009 legislation has shifted to the Floor of the Assembly and Senate for action by the full body of each house.

An updated and revised summary of pending legislation affecting the HSRA is presented in this report, as follows:

1. **AB 153 (Ma)** – *Operations and duties of the High Speed Rail Authority - Successor legislation to the Authority-sponsored AB 981 (Ma, 2007, later used for other issues).* The bill deletes language made obsolete by the passage of AB 3034 (Prop. 1A) last year regarding a financial plan and makes several technical and clarifying changes to statutes governing the powers duties of the Authority (for example, makes a technical reference that the Board is the “governing authority” of the Authority in cases of eminent domain, clarifies that the Authority’s existing eminent domain powers exempt the Authority from having to rely on the state Public Works Board to acquire property, and deletes obsolete contingency language and updates provisions requiring the Authority to prepare construction plans for the HST system). The bill also provides that the Authority may

hire its own legal counsel (and continue to use the services of the Attorney General, or both), similar to provisions for the California Transportation Commission.

Bill history/status: Approved by Assembly Transportation Committee on 3/23/09, 9-0; approved by Assembly Judiciary Committee 7-2 on 4/14/09; approved by Assembly Appropriations Committee 11-5 on 4/29/09; approved by Assembly 53-16 on 5/11/09. Sent to Senate; referred to Transportation and Housing and Judiciary Committees.
Approved Position: Support as sponsor.

2. **AB 289 (Galgiani)** – *CEQA Exemption for Grade Separation projects. Clarifies that a railroad grade separation project that is a component of the high-speed train system is included in the existing exemption from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) if the project eliminates an existing railroad grade separation or reconstructs an existing grade separation.* Current law provides an exemption from CEQA for grade separation projects that eliminate an existing grade separation or reconstruct a grade separation. There may be some ambiguity, however, whether such grade separation projects undertaken by the Authority and initially used by complementary rail passenger services (e.g., Caltrain, Metrolink, etc.) are covered by the exemption. The bill clarifies that the Authority's projects to eliminate an existing grade separation or reconstruct a grade separation qualify for the exemption by specifically referencing those projects in the existing exemption language.

Bill history/status: Approved by Assembly Transportation Committee 13-0 on 4/27/09; approved by Assembly 72-3 on 5/18/09. Sent to Senate; referred to Senate Rules committee; awaiting further assignment.
Approved position: Support

3. **AB 733 (Galgiani)** – *Job creation as a contract award factor. Authorizes the Authority to consider the creation of jobs in California when awarding major contracts or purchasing high speed trains.* The Authority's current powers and duties include, among other things, contractual authority, rights-of-way acquisition, eminent domain, debt issuance, setting fares and schedules, etc. The bill would add that the Authority, to the extent permitted by federal and state law, may consider the creation of jobs in California when awarding major contracts or purchasing high-speed trains and related equipment and supplies. The bill is permissive; it allows but does not require the Authority to utilize California job creation as a contractual criterion.

Bill history/status: Approved by the Assembly Transportation Committee 13-0 on 4/20/09; approved by Assembly Appropriations Committee 16-0 on 4/29/09; approved by Assembly 73-0 on 5/14/09. Sent to Senate; referred to Transportation and Housing Committee.
Approved position: Support

4. **AB 1375 (Galgiani)** – *Department of High Speed Trains. Creates a Department of High-Speed Trains within the Business, Transportation and Housing Agency to implement the policies of the High-Speed Rail Authority and perform the daily tasks of building the high-speed train project and implementing the HST system.* The Authority would continue as the policy and oversight body of the HST project and exercise those powers and duties described in Proposition 1A. The bill would transfer certain of the existing powers and responsibilities of the Authority to the department and add new duties, including the annual submission of a 6-year high-speed train capital improvement program and a separate progress report to the Legislature. The Authority would appoint the department director and the Governor could appoint up to 10 exempt executive employees to staff the department, who would serve at the pleasure of the director. The bill would extend the Authority's/departments' rights-of-way and property acquisition and management authority to parallel that exercised by Caltrans and would authorize the employment of in-house legal counsel.

Bill status: Approved by Assembly Transportation Committee 9-4 on 4/27/09; referred to Assembly Appropriations Committee. (Pending in Appropriations Committee at request of Assembly Speaker.)

Approved position: Monitor

5. **AB 928 (Blakeslee)** – *Earthquake early warning system.* Requires the Authority to develop an earthquake early warning system, in cooperation with several state agencies. The bill requires the warning system to be designed to protect the lives of high-speed train passengers and schoolchildren and protect critical infrastructure by providing advanced earthquake warning and by enabling preventative measures before an earthquake.

Bill status: Referred to Assembly Rules Committee, awaiting action. (Likely a 2-year bill.)

Approved position: Monitor

6. **SB 409 (Ducheny)** – *Creates a Department of Railroads in the Business, Transportation and Housing Agency, responsible for several current state rail programs.* The bill would combine in a single new agency several state rail functions and operations currently residing in other agencies: Caltrans' intercity rail (AMTRAK) program, the Public Utilities Commission's and Caltrans' goods movement (freight) rail programs, and the high-speed train (HST) program/project. The new department would also include the state's railroad grade separation programs and be responsible for the coordination of regional planning efforts for rail transportation. The department would be the only agency eligible to apply for and receive grant and loan funds from the federal government or other sources for intercity rail, high-speed rail, or freight rail purposes. The High Speed Rail Authority would become a division of the new Department of Railroads.

The position of Executive Director of the Authority would be eliminated. Instead, the Authority would be administered by a division chief who would be nominated by and report to the new Director of Railroads, and be approved by the Authority. The Director of Railroads would be nominated by the Governor and be subject to Senate confirmation, would serve as a member of the board of the Authority, and would permanently chair the Authority and preside at all its meetings. The bill would require that a task force composed of the Director of Transportation, Director of Railroads and a Public Utilities Commission representative be formed to resolve issues of overlapping jurisdiction of the agencies.

Bill history/status: Heard in Senate Transportation and Housing Committee as an information item on 4/14/09. Rule waiver granted 5/28/09 to allow bill to be heard in policy committee after bill action deadlines; set for hearing in Transportation and Housing Committee on 6/9/09.

Approved position: Monitor

7. **SB 455 (Lowenthal)** – *Operations and duties of the High Speed Rail Authority. Makes numerous conforming changes to statutory provisions and adds specific references to the Authority in statutes governing property acquisition activities and eminent domain. Adds additional Phase 1 project selection criteria and requires Senate confirmation of some Board appointees. Requires the Authority to prepare an overall project schedule on a quarterly basis, approve a quarterly contract status report, and approve all contract amendments at board meetings.* The bill proposes many technical and conforming changes to the Authority's property acquisition powers and incorporates several changes to law regarding property management as suggested by the Authority's legal counsel. The bill clarifies that the Authority has independent authority parallel to that of Caltrans in these property acquisition, management and disposition activities and is not under the general property management scheme administered by the Department of General Services for other agencies.

The bill also makes several author-initiated substantive changes to the Authority and its operations: a) the Governor's 5 appointees to the Authority would be subject to Senate confirmation (prospectively); b) the Authority would have to consider additional project selection criteria for investments in Phase 1 of the HST project—including access to railroad stations and terminals, improvements to travel times, service reliability, safety, improved connections between the San Joaquin Valley and southern California and the Bay Area, etc., or some combination of them; c) the Authority would have to prepare an overall project schedule with delivery milestones and related information and present the report quarterly to the board and the Legislature; d) the board would have to approve quarterly a written report on the status of contracts for the previous quarter, and submit the reports to the Legislature; and e) the board would have to formally approve all

proposed amendments to contracts, accompanied by a written report explaining the changes.

Bill history/status: Approved by the Senate Transportation and Housing Committee 10-1 on 4/22/09; approved by Senate Appropriations Committee 9-4 on 5/27/09; sent to Senate Floor and awaiting action.

Approved position: Monitor

8. **SB 526 (Ashburn)** – *San Joaquin rail corridor: Altamont Pass extension.* Requires Caltrans to enter into negotiations with operating freight and commuter passenger railroads to develop a service plan and operating agreement to extend San Joaquin Corridor intercity passenger train service (state-supported AMTRAK) to and from San Francisco using the Altamont Corridor.

Bill history/status: Approved by Senate Transportation and Housing 10-0 on 4/29/09; referred to Senate Appropriations Committee; held in Appropriations Committee under submission on Suspense File on 5/28/09.

Approved position: Monitor

9. **SB 527 (Kehoe—formerly Ashburn)** – *As introduced, spot bill (placeholder). Stated the Legislature’s intent to reorganize the High-Speed Rail Authority to ensure greater oversight and accountability for the HST project. Author was changed to Kehoe and subject matter changed to bicycle provisions on 5/6/09. No longer applicable to HSRA.*

Bill history/status: Amended to new subject matter and approved by Senate.

Approved position: Monitor (No longer relevant.)

10. **SB 783 (Ashburn)** - *High-speed rail business plan. Requires the Authority to adopt and submit a new business plan by March 1, 2012 and every two years thereafter.* The bill requires the preparation, publication, adoption and submittal to the Legislature of a new business plan every two years, beginning March 1, 2012. A draft of each plan must be published 60 days prior for public review and comment, including a public hearing. The biennial plans must include specific elements, including patronage and service level forecasts, alternative financial *pro formas*, project work schedules, funding sources, development strategies and other elements.

Bill history/status: Approved by Senate Transportation and Housing Committee 10-0 on 4/29/09; approved by Appropriations Committee 12-1 on 5/28/09; sent to Senate Floor for action.

Approved position: Monitor